Redefining Homelessness from a Systems Perspective: A Class Project Experience

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Abstract: Homelessness represents an enduring public health threat facing communities across the region. Children, families, and marginalized adults face life course implications of housing insecurity, while communities struggle to address an extensive array of needs within heterogeneous homeless populations. A graduate course at the University of Washington tackled an aspect of this problem by working with a provider in this space that helps homeless mothers and children. Acres of Diamonds provides a structured living plan, on-site counseling, parenting support and life-skill training that helps moms to re-establish their lives with purpose, confidence, and support to create lasting life change. However, even for this successful program, resources are scarce and goals are big. This talk summarizes the systems thinking approach that is utilized in the course projects, several projects and how the project sponsor will utilize the team’s proposals.

Bio: Dr. Christina Mastrangelo is an Associate Professor of Industrial & Systems Engineering at the University of Washington. She holds BS, MS and Ph.D. degrees in Industrial Engineering from Arizona State University. Dr. Mastrangelo is responsible for the department’s graduate systems engineering education program. Her research interests include the areas of operational modeling and prediction for quality and manufacturing, system-level modeling for infectious disease transmission, lung-cancer screening and healthcare delivery operations, and hierarchical modeling for obsolescence management. Dr. Mastrangelo’s research is sponsored by NSF and ONR.